UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.5/1997/NGO/2
5 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
Thirty-fifth session
25 February-6 March 1997
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*

FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: REVIEW OF RELEVANT UNITED NATIONS PLANS AND PROGRAMMES OF ACTION PERTAINING TO THE SITUATION OF SOCIAL GROUPS

Statement submitted by Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council of North and South America; HelpAge International; International Council of Women; International Council on Social Welfare; International Federation of Business and Professional Women; International Federation on Ageing; International Union of Family Organizations; Soroptimist International; Zonta International (non-governmental organizations in general consultative status); All India Women's Conference; Associated Country Women of the World; Baha'í International Community; Caritas Internationalis; Foundation for the Rights of the Family (PRODEFA); International Catholic Child Bureau; International Confederation of Christian Family Movements; International Council of Jewish Women; International Federation for Home Economics; International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres; International Federation of Social Workers; International Federation of University Women; International Kolping Society; Italian Centre of Solidarity; New Humanity; Pax Romana ICMICA-IMCS; SOS-Kinderdorf International; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts; World Federation of Methodist Women; World Leisure and Recreation Association; World Movement of Mothers; World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations (non-governmental organizations in special consultative status); International Association of Charities; Catholic International Education Office; European Union of Women; International Inner Wheel; International Round Table for the Advancement of Counselling; World Peace Council (Roster)

* E/CN.5/1997/1.

97-03491 (E) 110297

/...

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* * *

We, the undersigned international non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council,

Encouraged by the frequent and consistent references to family issues in the agendas, plans and programmes of action throughout the seven global conferences of the 1990s, which underline that the family is the basic unit of society, and that its key role in social development should be strengthened by giving it comprehensive protection and support, with attention to the rights, capabilities and responsibilities of its members (Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, para. 26 (h)),

Emphasizing that the family, by performing its basic functions, plays a crucial role in the implementation of human rights in the conduct of everyday life, such as the right to food, clothing and housing, medical care, health services, caring, nurturing and socialization, and the right to education, culture and development, all of which are enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,

Recalling that the family in its role as caretaker and protector carries out an overwhelming part of those functions that otherwise have to be discharged by institutions, and that in providing care to the weaker and most vulnerable members - children, youth, ageing, sick and disabled persons - the family also performs a crucial social function,

Underlining that families are often severely affected by problems of poverty, violence, unemployment, drugs and alcoholic dependence, and by inadequate housing and social services, that migrant, refugee and displaced families must be given special attention, and that the family dimension of these problems should be linked to global issues such as development, social integration, advancement of women and environment,

Stressing that supporting families is not just welfare policy but a long-term social investment which should be placed at the centre of social policy, and that the well-being of families represents in fact the well-being of society,

Believing that family issues should be given the same attention as issues concerning their individual members within the work of the United Nations Secretariat,

Recognizing that, in different cultures, and political and social systems, various forms of family exist,

Adhering to commitment 5 of the Copenhagen Declaration, recognizing that women's strengths and capabilities, including their great contribution to the income and welfare of the family and to the development of society, must be

fully acknowledged and valued, and that a change of attitudes, structures, policies, laws and practices are still sorely needed in order to erase all obstacles to human dignity, while promoting equality and equity so that men and women in partnership can share and reconcile family life and employment responsibilities,

Recalling the objectives of the International Year of the Family, reaffirmed by the General Assembly in its resolutions 47/237 of 20 September 1993 and 50/142 of 21 December 1995, and regretting the lack of any definite plan of action and the insufficient focus on the family within the work of the United Nations Secretariat,

1. Express the hope that the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 will include a review and assessment of the International Year of the Family and that the achievements obtained before, during and after the Year will be built up through a long-term plan of action including an effective follow-up at all levels;

2. Appeal to the members of the Commission for Social Development to give their careful attention to the comprehensive document containing the family-related provisions from the outcome of the seven conferences of the 1990s, as per General Assembly resolution 50/142;

3. Suggest that, as one element of the follow-up to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, a family dimension should be projected in developmental strategies within all sectors, so as to ensure that appropriate consideration is given to the impact of such strategies on families;

4. Stress the necessity for and value of formulating and adopting a declaration on the family spelling out its functions, rights and responsibilities, in the spirit of the 1993 Malta Statement of non-governmental organizations.